certified as the final administrative decision of the Department of Insurance.

Office of Administrative Hearings 1400 West Washington, Suite 101 Phoenix, Arizona 85007 (602) 542-9826

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You have the right to request a rehearing from the Department of Insurance pursuant to A.R.S. § 41-1092.09(A). In addition, you have the right to appeal your action to the Superior Court, pursuant to A.R.S. § 41-1092.08(H) although you may be required to seek a rehearing from the Department of Insurance before you appeal (see A.R.S. § 41-1092.09(B)). Your further rights will be lost if you do not act in a timely manner. You may wish to review these sections as quickly as possible after receipt of this notice. They can be located at your local library

Done this day, August 5, 2003.

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Cliff J. Vanell Director

Original transmitted by mail this day of Auguot\_\_, 2003 to:

Charles R. Cohen, Director Department of Insurance ATTN: Kathy Linder 2910 North 44th Street, Ste. 210 Phoenix, AZ 85018

Department of Insurance Catherine O'Neil 2910 North 44th Street, Suite 210 Phoenix, AZ 85018

Arizona Department of Insurance Rebecca Sanchez 2910 North 44th Street, Suite 210 Phoenix, AZ 85018

Grant Williams, P.C. Maria Crimi Speth 3200 North Central Ave, Ste 2400 Phoenix, AZ 85012

2	Mary M. Butterfield 2910 North 44th Street, Suite 21
4 5 6 7	Department of Insurance Bob Hill ATTN: Curvey Burton 2910 North 44th Street, Ste. 210 Phoenix, AZ 85018
8 9 10	Jennifer A. Boucek 1275 W. Washington Phoenix, AZ 85007
11 12 13 14 15	Department of Insurance Gerrie L. Marks 2910 North 44th Street, Suite 210 Phoenix, AZ 85018  Byhox Lockward
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epartment of Insurance ary M. Butterfield 10 North 44th Street, Suite 210 oenix, AZ 85018 partment of Insurance b Hill

# Office of Administrative Hearings

1400 West Washington, Suite 101 - Phoenix, Arizona 85007 Telephone (602)-542-9826 FAX (602)-542-9827

Janet Napolitano Governor

Cliff Vanell Director

June 25, 2003

Charles R. Cohen, Director Department of Insurance ATTN: Kathy Linder 2910 North 44th Street, Ste. 210 Phoenix, AZ 85018

Re: 02A-214-INS-res

In the Matter of:

KENT MAERKI,

Respondent.

Dear Mr. Cohen:

Please find the decision of the Office of Administrative Hearings for the above entitled matter.

Sincerely,

Cliff J. Vanell



Mission Statement: We will contribute to the quality of life in the State of Arizona by fairly and impartially hearing the contested matters of our fellow citizens arising out of State regulation.

## IN THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

In the Matter of:

No. 02A-214-INS-res

KENT MAERKI,

Respondent.

ADMINISTRATIVE
LAW JUDGE DECISION

**HEARING:** May 12, 2003. Record closed on June 6, 2003, upon submission of Post-Hearing Memoranda.

APPEARANCES: Assistant Attorney General Jennifer Boucek on behalf of the Arizona Department of Insurance; Maria Crimi Speth, Esq. on behalf of Kent Maerki ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Lewis D. Kowal

- 1. Kent Maerki ("Respondent/Maerki") is currently and, at all times material to this matter, was licensed as a life and disability life insurance agent (producer) in the State of Arizona, license number 21255.
- 2. This matter is a disciplinary matter in which the Arizona Department of insurance ("Department") alleges that in an original license application and three renewal applications Respondent failed to disclose certain information that was requested and required.
- 3. An issue was presented by Respondent as to the actual dates when the applications were submitted to the Department which is relevant as to when certain information was known to Respondent that should have been reflected in his completed applications to the Department.

#### First Application

4. The Department maintained that on September 26, 1995, Respondent submitted to the Department an Application for Individual Insurance License (the "First Application") for an individual life and disability insurance agent's license.

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- 6. Department Investigator Carmen Haga ("Investigator Haga") testified that from the Department's perspective, a license application is not considered to be complete until it is received with all of the questions having been fully answered and full payment of the application fee is presented. According to Investigator Haga, the application must be correct as of the date that the application is considered completed rather than the date when the application was signed by the applicant, if the signature date is earlier than the date of completion.
- 7. Investigator Haga testified that she was somewhat familiar with the procedures of the Department's licensing section but could not testify as to whether the First Application was received by the Department and kept pending receipt of the application fee or whether the First Application was submitted to the Department along with the application fee on September 26, 1995.
- 8. It is noted that Investigator Haga has been an Investigator for the Department for two years and there was no testimony or credible evidence presented as to the procedures followed in the Department's licensing division in 1995, when the First Application was submitted to the Department.
- 9. Respondent answered "No" to question 5 in the First Application which asked: SINCE YOUR LAST APPLICATION OR RENEWAL have you had any professional, vocational or business license refused, denied, suspended, revoked or restricted, or have you withdrawn any application for or surrendered any licenses?"
- 10. The Department presented an unpublished opinion that was issued on April 25, 1995 by the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit that affirmed an order of the United Sates District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, finding that Respondent and his then counsel had violated Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure *in Maerki v. Wilson* ("Wilson"), 53 F.3d 331, 1995 WL 242004 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. (Ohio)).

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- Kent Maerki and Jane Doe Maerki dba One Minute Rose of America, Docket No. CV 95-15178 ("Fisher").
- The Complaint in Fisher alleged that Respondent had committed common law 13. fraud, securities fraud, and consumer fraud resulting from the offer and sale of an automatic floral vending unit.
- Respondent testified that as of the date when he completed the First Application, 14. he was unaware of the above-mentioned Rule 11 violation decision and was unaware of the Fisher case. 15.
- Respondent testified that he became aware of the above-mentioned Rule 11 case upon receiving from the Department a copy of the unpublished Court of Appeals decision a few weeks before the hearing. 16.
- The evidence of record did not establish that Respondent ever received any order or judgment from the District Court or the Court of Appeals informing him about the dismissal of the action against the Wilsons and sanctioning both him and his
- The Department contended that by filing the appeal that shows that Respondent was aware of the decision and sanction. However, there is no evidence in the record that establishes who actually filed the appeal, so it is unclear as to whether Respondent

filed the appeal or whether the appeal was filed on his behalf by counsel who was also sanctioned.

- 18. Because the allegations involve what was known to Respondent at the time the First Application or subsequent applications were submitted to the Department, in order to support a finding that Respondent knew of the District Court or Court of Appeals decision, there must be evidence establishing or inferring that fact, and no credible evidence has been presented to establish that.
- 19 With respect of the Fisher Case, the Affidavit of Service of Process shows that Respondent was served with a copy of the Summons and Complaint on September 14, 1995. While the Department contends that the First Application was submitted to it on September 26, 1995 and the Fisher Case should have been disclosed, Respondent testified that he submitted the First Application to the Department on July 31, 1995 along with the application fee.
- 20. The weight of the credible evidence supports a finding that Respondent submitted the First Application to the Department on July 31, 1995.
- 21. On March 6, 1997, a civil complaint was filed in the Superior Court of Arizona, Maricopa County, *Hayden Commerce Center Partnership v. Kent Maerki, a single man dba One Minute Rose*, Docket No. CV97-04167 ("Hayden").
- 22. The Complaint in the Hayden case alleged that Respondent entered into a lease with the Plaintiff therein in February 1996 and had failed to pay rent from February 1996 to February 1997.
- 23. The Superior Court of Maricopa County case history docket for the Hayden Case shows that service was made by publication on two separate dates by the filing of the Affidavits of Publication which occurred on August 11 and 14, 1997.
- 24. Respondent testified that he was unaware of the Hayden Case or of any judgment in the Hayden Case until he was notified about it by the Department.

Insurance License Renewal Application filed by Maerki to renew his life and disability

On September 26, 1997, the Department received an Application for Individual

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Maerki answered "No" to the questions listed in Section V, Question E of the Second Application which asked: Are any civil, administrative, other judicial or quasijudicial proceedings of any kind, or any criminal proceedings in which an indictment, criminal complaint or information has been issued naming you as defendant, currently

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(1) Misappropriation, conversion or the withholding of moneys? (2) Incompetence or a source of injury and/or loss to anyone?

(3) Dishonesty in business or financial mattes?

insurance agent's license ("Second Application").1

(4) Fraud or misrepresentation?

(5) Any cause arising out of an insurance transaction?

pending against you in any jurisdiction based on any of the following:

On December 1, 1997, the Court entered a Default Judgment against 27. Respondent in the Hayden case in the amount of \$12,436.21 with interest at the rate of 10% per annum.

The Department contended that Respondent should have disclosed that the 28. Hayden Case was pending in the Second Application.

The weight of the evidence of record established that while Respondent was 29. served by publication, which is sufficient for that case to go forward in court based on constructive knowledge, Respondent did not have actual knowledge that the Hayden case was pending and could not have disclosed it in the Second Application.

#### Third Application

On September 21, 1999, the Department received an Application for an 30. Individual Insurance License Renewal Application ("Third Application") filed by Respondent to renew his life and disability insurance agent's license.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Second Application contains the date of September 26, 1997, as the date when Respondent signed

The Third Application contains the date of September 18, 1999, as the date when Respondent signed that application.

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- Respondent answered "No" to the questions listed in Part II, Section D of the 31. Third Application which asked: "Have you had any judgment, order or other determination, including any conviction issued or made against you in any criminal, civil, administrative or other judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding of any kind in any jurisdiction that has not been previously disclosed by you to this agency in a license application based on any of the following:
  - (1) Misappropriation, conversion or the withholding of moneys?
  - (2) Incompetence or a source of injury and/or loss to anyone?
  - (3) Dishonesty in business or financial matters?
  - (4) Fraud or misrepresentation?
  - (5) Any cause arising out of an insurance transaction?
- The Department contended that the above-mentioned Rule 11 determination and 32. the Hayden case judgment should have been disclosed in the Third Application. The Administrative Law Judge addressed this above with the finding concerning the First Application and the same rationale and ruling applies to the Third Application.
- The evidence of record established that the Hayden case judgment was a 33. default judgment. Respondent testified that he did not receive a copy of the judgment and was even unaware that the case was pending until he learned about the case and judgment from the Department.
- While it may be argued that through entry of the default judgment, Respondent 34. had constructive knowledge of the judgment, the weight of the evidence of record established that Respondent did not have actual knowledge that the Hayden case existed until he was made aware of it by the Department.
- In support of the Department's contention that Respondent knew of the default 35. judgment in the Hayden case, the Department referred to a Minute Entry in that case dated December 1, 1997, wherein the Court noted that the hearing was for a Civil Default and that "an individual who identified himself as Kent Maerki contacted the court by leaving a message on the Court's voice-mail indicating that he had received notice of today's default hearing, but was in Colorado and was unable to attend." (Exhibit 5a).
- Respondent testified that he did not contact the Court regarding the Hayden case and did not leave such a message. Further, Respondent testified that he was not

in Colorado at the time of the default hearing in the Hayden case and did not know of the default hearing. The Administrative Law Judge finds Respondent's testimony in that regard to be credible and more persuasive than a note in a Minute Entry that cannot verify whether the person who left a voice-mail message was in fact the Respondent.

- 37. The issues to be addressed at the instant hearing involve whether the Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented information to the Department in order to obtain or maintain licensure. Under the circumstances, imputed knowledge to Respondent of an action which was permitted to proceed by service of publication and where there was an entry of a default judgment is not sufficient to establish that Respondent knew or should have known of the existence of the Hayden case and Judgment. Therefore, the evidence of record does not support a finding that Respondent intentionally or negligently failed to disclose or misrepresented that information to the Department.
- 38. On January 20, 2000, the Court issued a Judgment against Respondent in the Fisher case for common law fraud, violation of the Arizona Securities Laws and Arizona Consumer Fraud Act in the total amount of \$51,750.00 and \$50,000.00 in punitive damages.

#### Fourth Application

- 39. On August 1, 2001, The Department received an Application for an Individual Insurance License Renewal Application ("Fourth Application") filed by Respondent for renewal of his life and disability insurance agent's license.<sup>3</sup>
- 40. Respondent answered "No" to the questions listed in Part II, Question D of the Fourth Application which asked: "Have you had any judgment, order or other determination, including any conviction issued or made against you in any criminal, civil, administrative or other judicial or quasi judicial proceeding of any kind in any jurisdiction that has not been previously disclosed by you to this agency in a license application based on any of the following:
  - (1) Misappropriation, conversion or the withholding of moneys?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Fourth Application contains the date of July 22, 2001, as the date when Respondent signed that application.

- (2) Incompetence or a source of injury and/or loss to anyone?
- (3) Dishonesty in business or financial matters?
- (4) Fraud or Misrepresentation?
- (5) Any cause arising out of an insurance transaction?
- The Department contended that the above-mentioned Rule 11 determination in 41. the Wilson case, the Hayden case judgment, and the Fisher case judgment should have been disclosed by Respondent in the Fourth Application.
- Jeffrey Proper ("Mr. Proper"), counsel for the Plaintiffs in the Fisher case 42. testified that Respondent answered the Complaint and filed a counter claim and participated to a degree in the lawsuit until a certain point in time, after which, counsel had difficulty locating Respondent.
- 43. The Fisher case proceed to a Default Judgment and Mr. Proper used his best efforts in attempting to locate Respondent without success prior to the default judgment being entered and represented that tot the Court.
- Mr. Proper testified that after the Default Judgment in the Fisher case, he spoke 44. to Respondent on three different dates.
- Mr. Proper testified that in mid-2001, he was contacted by a person who 45. provided information as to the whereabouts of Respondent. Based on that information, Mr. Proper contacted Respondent and discussed with him the Fisher case judgment and inquired as to whether Respondent had any intention to make any payments.
- 46. Mr. Proper testified that in July 2002, in response to notification from someone appearing to be Respondent, he contacted Respondent and again made inquiry as to whether Respondent had any intention of making payments on the Judgment. According to Mr. Proper, Respondent stated that he would like to make payments but did not have the ability to do so.
- Mr. Proper also testified that he spoke to Respondent about three weeks ago 47. about the instant hearing.
- Respondent testified that he did to recall having had any conversations with Mr. 48. Proper other than the one that occurred three weeks ago.
- The Administrative Law Judge finds Mr. Proper's testimony to be credible and more persuasive than Respondent's testimony concerning telephone conversation that

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took place between Mr. Proper and Respondent concerning the Fisher case and judgment.

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#### All Applications

- The weight of the credible evidence established that as of mid-2001, 50. Respondent had been made aware of the Fisher case Default Judgment and that information should have been disclosed on the Fourth application.
- Although the Department contends that there is a pattern of conduct and series 51. of lawsuits and orders that Respondent did not disclose to the Department, the weight of the credible evidence of record established that the Rule 11 sanction in the Wilson case involved Respondent acting as a Plaintiff, and in the Hayden and Fisher cases, Respondent was the Defendant, for a total of three cases.
- As set forth above, the Department did not present credible evidence to establish 52. that as of the date of the First, Second, Third or Fourth Applications, Respondent was aware of the Rule 11 sanction decision in the Wilson case. Therefore, it is determined that Respondent did not misrepresent or withhold information regarding that matter.
- 53. With respect to the Hayden case and Judgment, the weight of the evidence of record established that Respondent was unaware that the case was pending or of any judgment entered in that matter. Therefore, it is determined that Respondent did not intentionally withhold or misrepresent information on the Second, Third or Fourth Applications regarding the Hayden case.
- With respect to the Fisher case, Respondent was not served with the Summons 54. and Complaint until September 14, 1995. Therefore, Respondent should have disclosed to the Department that the Fisher case was pending in the Second Application. The Default Judgment was entered in the Fisher case on January 20, 2002, though there is no indication that Respondent knew of it until mid-2001.
- In mitigation, Respondent testified that he thought the Fisher case had been 55. dropped. There is evidence in a document showing that Respondent advised the Fishers in a letter as to his new change of address and telephone number but failed to notify the Superior Court of his change of address.
- The docket of the Fisher case shows that there was an eighteen month period 56. when there was no activity causing the case to be placed on the inactive calendar and

dismissed. Mr. Proper testified that the case dismissal was a mistake and that upon contacting the Court and making the appropriate filing, the Order Dismissing the Case was vacated and the matter was restored to the trial calendar.

- 57. Respondent testified that because of inactivity regarding the Fisher case, he believed that the Fishers dropped the case and did not want to pursue it. However, the weight of the evidence of record shows that position to be disingenuous, because he did not notify the Court of a change of address so as to be updated as to the status of the case nor did he take affirmative action to determine its status though he knew that the Plaintiffs were pursuing it through their counsel, Mr. Proper. So even if the Administrative Law Judge does not find that Respondent had a continuing obligation to keep abreast as to the status of the Fisher case so as to properly inform the Department if a judgment was entered, the weight of the credible evidence of record established that Respondent was made aware of the Fisher case Judgment in mid-2001 through a conversation he had with Mr. Proper and should have disclosed that judgment in the Fourth Application.
- 58. Respondent testified that he has been in the insurance industry for 35 years, having been also licensed in California and Ohio, and that, but for the instant matter, has not had any disciplinary action taken against his insurance licenses. That record is taken into consideration in determining the nature of the disciplinary action to be taken against Respondent.

#### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

- Respondent maintained that the violations of law alleged in the amended Notice of Hearing involve A.R.S. § 20-295, which was not effective until October 2001, after the alleged acts occurred and Respondent asserts that the statute cannot be applied retroactively.
- 2. The Department concurred with Respondent regarding the applicability of A.R.S. § 20-295 and requested that the Amended Notice of Hearing be further amended to reflect alleged violations of A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3).<sup>4</sup> The Administrative Law Judge

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A.R.S. § 20-316 was in effect at the time when the alleged conduct occurred and repealed when A.R.S. § 20-295 became effective on October 1, 2001. The provisions of A.R.S. § 20-295 (A)(3) are essentially the same as that that was contained in A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3).

amends the Amended Notice of Hearing to reflect allegations of Respondent having violated the provisions of A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3), which are now codified in A.R.S. § 20-295(A)(3).

#### 3. A.R.S. § 20-316(A) provided:

A. The Director may suspend for not to exceed twelve months or may revoke or refuse to renew any license issued under this article ... of, upon notice to the licensee and to the insurer represented, as to an agent, or broker, as to a solicitor, and upon a hearing, if demanded, the director finds as to the licensee ay one or more of the following:

- 3. The existence of misrepresentation or fraud in obtaining or attempting to obtain any insurance license.
- 4. A.R.S. § 20-295(A) provides:

The Director may deny, suspend for not more than twelve months, revoke or refuse to renew an insurance producer's license or may impose a civil penalty in accordance with subsection F of this section or any combination of action for any one or more of the following causes:

- 3. Obtaining or attempting to obtain a license through misrepresentation or fraud.
- 5. Although Respondent objected to the above-mentioned request, the Administrative Law Judge finds that Respondent was prepared to address the merits of the issues raised during the hearing and there is no prejudice amending the Amended Notice of Hearing to reflect alleged violations of A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3). Therefore, the Administrative Law Judge amends the Amended Notice of Hearing to reflect allegations of Respondent having violated A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3), which is now codified in A.R.S. § 20-295(A)(3).
- 6. The Department contended that failing to disclose information, as set forth in the above Findings of Fact, are violations of law but also that the activity underlying the above-mentioned Orders, Decisions and Judgments show Respondent to be untrustworthy and dishonest in business practices.

7. The above-mentioned Rule 11 sanctions in the Wilson case show Respondent's failure to be honest to the Court and judicial system, however, the nature of the activities of Respondent therein did not involve dealings with business practices.

- 8. The allegations in the Fisher case, though they involved common law and consumer fraud and securities violations, which are of strict liability, the Judgment was a default judgment.
- 9. With respect to the Hayden case, the judgment was by default and did not involve any fraud but involved dishonest business practices in that a valid contractual obligation for payment was not made by Respondent.
- 10. With respect to the First Application, the Administrative Law Judge finds that Respondent did not violate A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3) regarding any of the abovementioned matters.
- 11. With respect to the Second Application, The Administrative Law Judge finds that Respondent should have disclosed that the Fisher case was pending and his failure to disclose that case in the Second Application constitutes a violation of A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3).
- 12. With respect to the Third Application, the Administrative Law Judge finds that Respondent did not violate A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3) regarding any of the abovementioned matters.
- 13. With respect to the Fourth Application, the Administrative Law Judge finds that Respondent should have disclosed the judgment in the Fisher case and his failure to do so constitutes a violation of A.R.S. § 20-316(A)(3) now codified in A.R.S. § 20-295(A)(3).
- 14. Grounds exist for the Director of the Department ("Director") to suspend, revoke, or refuse to renew Respondent's life and disability insurance agent's (producer') license pursuant to A.R.S. §20-316(A)(3).

### RECOMMENDED ORDER

Based on the above, and taking into consideration the Respondent's otherwise good licensing record, it is recommended that on the effective date of the Order entered in this matter, all insurance licenses issued by the Department to Respondent shall be suspended for six months.

Done this day, June 25, 2003.

Lewis D. Kowal

Administrative Law Judge

Original transmitted by mail this 25 day of <u>June</u>, 2003, to:

Department of Insurance Charles R. Cohen

ATTN: Kathy Linder

2910 North 44th Street, Ste. 210

Phoenix, AZ 85018

By A Thomason